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ABSTRACT

Chapter 1 is the largest federal education program in existence. It provides extra services to help low-achieving students and is targeted primarily at areas where low-income families reside. Parent involvement in designing and implementing the program is an essential part of Chapter 1. However, the parent involvement component is often not as strong or effective as it should be, possibly because legal requirements for parent involvement are sometimes not fully understood or implemented. This booklet is designed to help make parent involvement in Chapter 1 programs more effective. It contains: (1) a brief summary of basic information about Chapter 1; (2) a description of recent Chapter 1 regulations and legal requirements, history of parent involvement, and suggestions on how parent advocates can assist parents; (3) suggestions for parents on how to use their rights to ensure a strong parent involvement program; (4) a draft policy for school districts which may serve as a model for local parent involvement policies; and (5) a set of survey questions to help parents look at how well parent involvement is working in their own Chapter 1 programs. (APG)

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# Guidelines for Parent Involvement in Chapter 1 Programs

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# Guidelines for Parent Involvement in Chapter 1 Programs

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# Introduction

Chapter 1 is the largest federal education program. It provides extra services to help low-achieving students. It is targeted primarily to areas where low-income families reside.

Parent involvement in designing and implementing the program is an essential part of Chapter 1. All too often, however, the parent involvement component is not as strong or effective as it should be. The legal requirements for parent involvement are sometimes not fully understood or fully implemented.

## About This Booklet

This booklet is designed to help make parent involvement in Chapter 1 programs more effective. It contains:

(1) A brief summary of basic information about Chapter 1.

(2) A description of recent Chapter 1 regulations and other legal requirements. This section also provides some history on parent involvement in Chapter 1 and suggestions on how parent advocates (including legal services programs) can assist parents.

(3) Suggestions for parents on how to use their rights to make sure that there is a strong parent involvement program.

(4) A draft policy for school districts that may serve as a model for local parent involvement policies, which are now required by law. (Please ***send us a copy of the policy*** your own school district develops.)

(5) A set of survey questions to help parents look at how well parent involvement is working in their own Chapter 1 programs. (In addition to sharing the results with other parents in your district, please be sure to ***send us a copy of the answers.***)

## Support Services Available

The Center for Law and Education can provide support to local legal services programs and other advocates seeking to assist Chapter 1 parents—including telephone consultation and training. Parents may also obtain assistance from the National Coalition of Title I Chapter 1 Parents [1314 14th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005, (202) 483-8822].

## Copies of This Booklet

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# Chapter 1: Is It Working?

## What Is Chapter 1?

Chapter 1 of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act (ECIA) [formerly Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)] is the largest federal aid program for elementary and secondary schools. Chapter 1 provides federal dollars to school districts to enable schools in poor neighborhoods to pay for extra educational services for children who are behind in school. Most Chapter 1 money is used to provide extra help in reading and math for elementary school children whose test scores show that they are not performing at or near the level of other children their age.

Educational programs are possible because Chapter 1 funds pay the salaries of teachers and classroom aides to work with educationally disadvantaged children in small groups in their own classrooms or in special workrooms, and because Chapter 1 funds purchase special materials and equipment designed to help children who are having trouble learning to read or do math. Chapter 1 funds are also used to train Chapter 1 and regular teachers so they are better prepared to help children in need of special educational assistance. In addition, Chapter 1 funds are used to train and promote parent participation in planning, carrying out, and evaluating Chapter 1 programs. Parents work on school committees to support and improve their children's instructional activities and in the classroom as Chapter 1 aides.

## What Are Chapter 1's Most Important Rules?

### 1. Targeting Schools

Chapter 1 money goes to those schools with the highest concentration of children from low-income families. When the law was first passed it contained an exception to the targeting rule which allowed school districts to spend some of their Chapter 1 funds on district-wide compensatory education projects for low-income children. In December 1983, Congress amended Chapter 1 and took out this exception to the targeting rule.

### 2. Serving Children Most In Need

When Chapter 1 became law it was not clear whether schools were required to serve first those children furthest behind in school, or whether other criteria would be used. The December 1983 amendments clarified the intent of Chapter 1 to reach first those children furthest behind their classmates in school and therefore most in need of extra educational help.

### 3. Involving Parents In Program Planning and Operations

The effect of the December 1983 amendments was to strengthen Chapter 1's parent involvement requirements. At first the Chapter 1 law only said that programs had to be "designed and implemented in consultation with parents . . ." Now Chapter 1 requires that school districts hold a meeting for parents of all eligible children in the school district to tell them about Chapter 1 and to set up a process for keeping parents involved throughout the year. It also requires that school districts have *written policies* to make sure that

- parents *are* involved in planning and carrying out programs;
- parents have the opportunity to give their views on Chapter 1 policies; and
- parents (and the general public) have access to program plans and evaluations.

### 4. Providing Extra Educational Help to Children in Need

Chapter 1 funds are supposed to provide *extra* educational help to children who are behind in school. This means that Chapter 1 should not be a substitute for the regular educational program, but should be provided on top of those services. Schools that receive Chapter 1 monies should in no way be penalized by having their other resources reduced. For example, Chapter 1 schools should have about the same number and quality of regular teachers, support personnel, instructional materials, and supplies as non-Chapter 1 schools.

### 5. Designing Programs of Sufficient Size, Scope and Quality

Chapter 1 requires that projects be "of sufficient size, scope and quality" and that funds be concentrated on a sufficiently limited number of students and services to ensure that the needs of participating children are met. The law does not define how to meet these requirements, but Chapter 1 services should generally involve smaller classes, more hours of instruction in reading and math, special teachers and aides, and more varied instructional approaches and materials than the regular school program.

### 6. Evaluating Programs for Effectiveness

Chapter 1 requires school districts to evaluate projects to see if project goals are being met. Student achievements in the basic skills—reading, language arts, and math—must be measured. Evaluation must also show whether students who improved in Chapter 1 were able to keep up at their improved level for more than one year. The December 1983 amendments added requirements that

- school districts use their evaluation results to improve programs;
- state education agencies do evaluations of Chapter 1 every 2 years; and
- the federal government do a national evaluation of Chapter 1.



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# How May Chapter 1 Funds Be Spent?

Chapter I funds may be spent

- to hire special teachers, aides, and counseling and guidance personnel;
- to train teachers, aides, parents, and other school personnel (with certain limits);
- to purchase equipment and books (and other instructional materials);
- to carry out the needs assessment for identification of children to be served by the program;
- to support any activities necessary in order to meet parent involvement requirements such as training, distribution of materials, holding meetings, transportation, and babysitting; and
- to provide health, social, and nutritional services if these are not available from other sources.

*(This section is excerpted from the booklet "Chapter 1: Is it Working?", published by the Children's Defense Fund. Reprinted with permission.)*

# New Chapter 1 Regulations Strengthen Parents' Rights

The United States Department of Education, in a policy reversal, has issued new regulations which, together with Congressional language, strengthen the rights of parents to be involved in designing and implementing Chapter 1 programs.

The two most important changes under the new requirements, which were published in the May 19, 1986 *Federal Register* (51 Fed.Reg. 18404), are that:

(1) each school district must adopt *written policies* for assuring that parents of the children being served have an adequate opportunity to participate in the design and implementation of the program; and

(2) the *annual meeting* to which all parents of eligible children must be invited is not to be regarded as full parent consultation but must instead be a way to *initiate ongoing consultation*, and must include:
- a discussion of the Chapter 1 program and activities;
- an explanation of the parents' rights of consultation;
- an initial solicitation of input from parents; and
- an opportunity for parents to establish mechanisms for maintaining ongoing communication among themselves and with teachers and school officials.

Legal services programs and other advocates for low-income parents can play an important role in informing Chapter 1 parents about their rights. Those parents may then need assistance in exercising those rights—including assistance in negotiating the required district parent involvement policies and in preparing for the annual parent meeting.

## What is Chapter 1?

Chapter 1 is the largest federally funded elementary and secondary education program ($3.7 billion). Once known as "Title I" of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, it became, in modified form, "Chapter 1" of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981 as part of the massive rewriting of federal laws that accompanied the major budget cuts of that year.

It provides funds for extra services (such as remedial reading or math instruction) needed by "educationally deprived"—i.e., low-achieving—students residing in school attendance areas with large numbers of low-income children. (Funds are distributed to certain schools based upon their numbers of low-income students, but then may be used for low-achieving students regardless of income.) Once schools have been selected, an assessment of the educational needs of eligible students—those achieving below grade level—is conducted and a program is then designed to meet certain of those needs. Program evaluation is also required, and should be used for further planning.

## History of the Chapter 1 Parent Involvement Requirements

Under Title I, districts were required to have elected Parent Advisory Councils (PACs), at both the district level and the individual school or project level. With the enactment of Chapter 1 in 1981, Congress eliminated the detailed PAC provisions and substituted a one line requirement that parents be consulted in the design and implementation of programs.

In 1983 amendments, amid evidence of a large decline in parent involvement, Congress called for local parent policies, developed with parent input, and for the annual parent meeting described above. However, the proposed regulations issued by the Department of Education in 1984 largely ignored much of what Congress said. (The proposal omitted the local policy requirement altogether and failed to explain the role of the annual meeting as part of, rather than a substitute for, a system of ongoing parent communication and consultation.)

In response to much urging by parent advocacy groups, the Department revisited the issue and has now issued final regulations for the 1983 amendments which do reflect more of the legislation's history and intent.

## Why Stronger Parent Involvement Is Important

Parent involvement is important for several related reasons. First, there is a good deal of evidence that schools' active involvement of parents can boost student achievement.* Second, without significant parent involvement, there is no assurance that the program the district designs will be responsive to the needs and perspectives of parents and students of the particular community. Third, informed and involved parents are critical to effective enforcement of program requirements, since they and their children are usually the only "outsiders" with both a stake in, and regular contact with, the programs.

*See National Committee for Citizens in Education, *Parent Participation-Student Achievement: The Evidence Grows*, an annotated bibliography of research which shows the positive effects of parent participation. (1981) 70 pp., $4.25. Another relevant publication by NCCE is *Beyond the Bake Sale: An Educator's Guide for Working with Parents and Citizens* (1985) 150 pp., $8.95. Order from NCCE at 10840 Little Patuxent Parkway, Suite 301, Columbia, MD 21044 (301-997-9300).

## Why Parents Will Need Advocacy Assistance

The history of Title I/Chapter 1 parent involvement does not inspire confidence about the implementation of the new regulations. Even during the time when Parent Advisory Councils were required, the extent of real involvement in design and implementation of programs was minimal or nonexistent in many districts, and surveys of school officials have traditionally shown resistance to involving parents in decisionmaking—as distinct from the kinds of school and home support activities which officials much more readily welcome from parents. Other more recent studies show a severe drop in real parent involvement from even these low levels after 1981, when the PAC requirements were dropped. (Contact the Center for Law and Education for references to the various studies.)

This record is in marked contrast to two other federally funded programs, Head Start (for pre-school children) and the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, where parents have more clearly demarcated rights concerning decisionmaking.

The fact that complaints and litigation are regularly filed by parents concerning violations of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, while they are extremely rare for Chapter 1, may be more an indication of lower parent awareness and involvement in Chapter 1, and less an indication of fewer violations. For example, there is evidence that Chapter 1 programs often do not adequately serve the lowest achieving of eligible students, despite requirements that those most in need be served and that the programs be of sufficient size, scope, and quality to give reasonable promise of meeting the students' needs. This is an example of an issue which could be raised by parents who are adequately involved in and informed about the program.

Unless parents are prepared to take an active role, there is a real danger that the new local parent involvement policies will be developed without strong parent input; that the policies will not ultimately provide for informed and effective involvement in all aspects of the Chapter 1 program; that the annual meeting becomes a substitute for, rather than a means to achieve, ongoing involvement and consultation; that consultation becomes rubber stamping by a few, selected parents; or that parents do not get the information and resources they need to play an effective role.

## What the Parent Policy and the Parent Meeting Should Address

In understanding parents' current rights, it is important to draw from Congressional language as well as the new regulations, since certain requirements are still not fully reflected in the regulations.

At a minimum, the district's parent consultation policy should reflect, and the annual parent meeting should discuss the following key issues:

**1. Consultation on All Program Aspects.** The right of consultation extends to the entire program. If, as the law requires, the district's policy is to successfully assure adequate consultation, it must adequately cover procedures for consultation in each phase of program design and implementation, including:

- selection of attendance zones;
- assessment of student needs;
- determination of program goals and objectives;
- choice of educational strategies and methods;
- implementation of projects;
- program evaluation.

Further, the policy must cover all significant areas of program decisionmaking, regardless of whether they occur at the district level, the school level, or the individual project level. In order to set up adequate, ongoing consultation mechanisms, it may also be necessary to hold annual parent meetings at both the district and the school level.

**2. Consultation on the Parent Involvement Policy.** As one significant aspect of program development and implementation, the parent consultation policy itself must be developed and implemented with parent input. Further, Congress, in declaring that school districts "shall have policies to assure parental consultation in the planning, development, and operation of programs," also specifically required that the districts "shall . . . assure that parents have had an opportunity to express their views concerning those policies." (Joint Explanatory Statement of the Committee of Conference, H.Conf.Rpt. No. 98-574, p. 13; 1983 U.S. Code Cong. & Admin. News 2207.)

**3. Ensuring that Consultation is Adequate.** It is not enough simply to have parent consultation policies. Rather, as the regulations state, there must be written policies which "*ensure* that parents of the children being served have an *adequate* opportunity to participate in the design and implementation of the LEA's Chapter 1 project." [34 C.F.R. Sec. 200.53(b) (1); 51 Fed.Reg. 18410 (May 19, 1986). (See also the Joint Explanatory Statement of the Committee of Conference, *supra*, where Congress declared that the district responsibility is "to assure adequate parental involvement.") Thus, the policies must be tailored to achieve adequate consultation by addressing the barriers to that consultation.

**4. Timely Response to Parent Input.** According to the House Report accompanying the 1983 amendments, "timely responses to parents' recommendations" are "an essential part of consultation between school officials and parents." (H.Rpt. No. 98-51, page 5, 1983 U.S. Code Cong. & Admin. News 2192.) This too should therefore be addressed in the written policy and in the annual meeting.

**5. Access to Information.** As the Department of Education has recognized,

> To be meaningful, parent involvement must be based on adequate information which should include on a continuing and timely basis proposed and final applications, needs assessment documents, budgetary information, evaluation data, copies of local, State, and Federal laws, regulations, and guidelines, and any other Chapter 1 information needed for full effective parent involvement.

["Memorandum to State Chapter 1 Coordinators" on Parent Involvement in Chapter 1 Projects, Mary Jean LeTendre, Director, Compensatory Education Programs, United States Department of Education (May 27, 1986).] Further, the Joint Explanatory Statement of the Committee of Conference, cited above, declares that school districts "shall . . . have policies to assure the adequate provision of program plans and evaluations to parents and the public." (H.Conf.Rpt. No. 98-574, *supra*.) Thus, the policies should address this issue specifically, including the possible need for assistance in understanding the information, as well as the particular needs in reaching parents with limited English proficiency.

**6. Other Resources, Support, and Training.** Under the law and regulations, "if parents desire further activities, the local education agency may, upon request, provide reasonable support for such activities." [20 U.S.C. Sec. 3805(e).] According to the regulations, this support may include, but is not limited to,

## Obtaining Chapter 1 Legal Documents

The Chapter 1 law and regulations can be found in public documents available in law libraries and many other public libraries. However, you will need *all* of the following in order to obtain a complete picture of the legal requirements for parent involvement in Chapter 1:

1) The Chapter 1 law: United States Code, Title 20, Sections 3801-3876, especially Section 3805(b) (3) and 3805(e).

2) The "Conference Report," in which Congress explained what the law requires: 1983 United States Code Congressional and Administrative News, page 2207 (Joint Explanatory Statement of the Committee of Conference, House Conference Report No. 98-574), also available in the Congressional Record, Volume 129, page H 10602, paragraph 10 (November 18, 1983).

3) The "House Committee Report," further explaining the law: 1983 United States Congressional Administrative News, page 2192 (House Report No. 98-51).

4) The regulations: *Federal Register,* Volume 51, page 18404 (May 19, 1986).

5) The Department of Education's "Memorandum to State Chapter 1 Coordinators" on access to information (May 27, 1986), quoted in paragraph 5 of this article.

Again, it is important to read all these documents together because certain requirements are still not fully reflected in the regulations, which may be somewhat misleading if read alone.

The Center for Law and Education will provide free copies of these documents to staff members of legal services programs. Chapter 1 parents should contact your local legal services program if you need assistance in locating or analyzing these documents or their legal effects. Copies of some of them may also be available from the director of a local Chapter 1 program, or from the Chapter 1 office of your state department of education.

reasonable access to meeting space and materials; provision of information concerning the law, regulations, and instructional programs; and training programs. [34 C.F.R. Sec. 204.21(b); see also H.Rpt. No. 98-51, *supra.*]

The parent consultation policies and annual meetings should therefore address what kinds of support will be provided, in what manner. These decisions on resources and support should be made in a manner designed to meet the underlying legal requirement—that the policies assure adequate consultation and involvement and address barriers to that involvement (such as lack of information, difficulties in meeting, etc.)

**7. Outreach and Planning.** All eligible parents are to be invited to the annual meeting and should be informed about their rights of consultation—raising questions about the form and content of notices and invitations, the time and place of meetings, the role of parents in planning and conducting the meeting, etc. Again, special attention must be paid to the needs of limited-English-proficient parents.

**8. Representative Input and Parents' Organizational Rights.** Previous research has shown that one of the factors associated with low parent input is interference, dominance, or control by district staff. In order to meet the mandate for adequate consultation, the policies and annual meeting should therefore address the question of how to assure that the process of recruiting and/or selecting parents for consultation is broadly representative and that parent input is shaped by, and represents the voice of all affected parents. The House Report specifically recognized that parents must be given the "primary initiative for formulating parental opinion."

Further, as the regulations recognize, parents must be given an opportunity to establish their own mechanisms for maintaining ongoing communication among themselves in order to exercise that initiative, and this opportunity must be discussed at the annual meeting. [34 C.F.R. Sec. 204.21(a) (1) (iii).] Consistent with this, the House Report, as cited above, states that these requirements are not intended "to limit parents' existing constitutional rights to communicate with each other and with school officials"—which include the constitutional rights to form organizations in a manner of the parents' own choosing, to speak out, to distribute literature, to assemble or meet, to petition or complain, and to use school facilities on the same basis as they are made available to any other parent or outside groups.

# Getting Started: How to Reach and Assist Parents

Parents may need assistance in order to learn about or successfully exercise the above rights and participate in the annual meeting and the development of parent involvement policies. For legal services programs and other advocates who do not yet have adequate contact with Chapter 1 parents, there may be a variety of ways to reach them:

- Some school districts have paid Chapter 1 parent coordinators who may be cooperative.
- There may be formal parent advisory councils with parent officers, at the district or school level.
- The school or district may agree to include a notice from or about you in mailings to Chapter 1 parents.
- You could request to speak and/or distribute information at the annual parent meeting.
- The National Coalition of Title I Chapter 1 Parents [1314 14th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005, (202-483-8822)] may have members in the school district.
- You may have to resort to outside means of contacting parents—through churches, civic organizations, civil rights groups, youth organizations, etc.

Once you have reached parents, you could offer a variety of forms of assistance—training sessions, literature, help on individual problems, etc. This assistance could focus both on parents' consultation rights and on issues about the Chapter 1 program itself.

The Center for Law and Education can provide support to local legal services programs and other advocates seeking to assist Chapter 1 programs—including telephone consultation, training, and materials.

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# Your Rights As A Parent To Be Involved in Chapter 1 Programs

In addition to becoming familiar with the Chapter 1 law and regulations, parents need to develop skills in how to implement them. This section contains suggestions for how parents can use their legal rights to make sure that there is strong parent involvement in their local Chapter 1 program.

There must be ongoing consultation with parents in designing and implementing Chapter 1 programs. To carry out this duty, schools must develop policies to insure that parent involvement is adequate. Schools must give parents a chance for input into the development of these parent involvement policies; there must be an opportunity for parents to comment on them. Schools must also develop policies to insure that program plans and evaluations are distributed to Chapter 1 parents and the public in an adequate manner. Schools' duty to consult with parents includes providing timely responses to parents' recommendations.

In order to create adequate parent involvement in ongoing Chapter 1 decisions, each school district must first hold a meeting, to which all eligible Chapter 1 parents must be invited. The purposes of this meeting must be to:

(1) explain the Chapter 1 program to parents,
(2) explain their rights to be consulted,
(3) give parents a chance to set up their own mechanisms for maintaining communication among parents and for developing parent input, and
(4) give the school and the parents an initial opportunity to set up mechanisms for ongoing consultation between the parents and the school about Chapter 1 decisions.

Under the law, this is what is *supposed to* happen. To make sure it happens that way, however, parents need to take an active role—before, during, and after the initial meeting. Otherwise, you might find that, instead of using the meeting to set up ongoing consultation, the school may act as though the meeting itself is enough to satisfy the consultation requirement. Or ongoing consultation might turn out to be rubber-stamping by a few, selected parents, without real discussion among parents. Or parents might not get the information they need to develop informed opinions about the program.

In developing your own action plan, you may want to consider the accompanying "Draft School District Policy on Parent Involvement in Chapter 1" for ideas on the kinds of policies you and other parents would like to see your system adopt.

## A. Before The Meeting

Before the meeting occurs, you should be *talking and meeting with* as many *other parents* as you can, as often as possible, and as far in advance of the meeting as possible. Your goals should be to play an active role in planning the school meeting, to see that as many parents as possible are ready to take an active, informed role at the meeting, and to begin to develop methods for parent-parent communication so that parents can continue to develop their own positions on Chapter 1 issues. (In addition to your contacts, possible ways to reach other parents are through school or district parent advisory councils, if they exist, the Chapter 1 program coordinator or, if s/he exists, parent coordinator, friendly school staff members, and your own children.)

*Find out* as much as you can beforehand *about the Chapter 1 program,* what policies currently exist, what is working well and what isn't, how various legal requirements are being interpreted and enforced, etc. You can get this information from talking to other parents, talking to students, asking school administrators and teachers questions, and asking for Chapter 1 documents (for example, federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines, project applications, needs assessment documents, program plans, budget information, evaluation data).

Take as active a role as you can in *planning the school meeting with school officials.* Make sure that the *invitations to the parents* are adequate. They should be: distributed in a way that will reach all the parents, sent with enough lead time, contain all the information that parents need to understand the importance of the meeting and what the meeting will cover, and written in clear understandable language—including translations for parents who do not read English.

Make sure the school meeting is planned for a *time and place* which will be convenient for parents. Because some Chapter 1 decisions are made at the *school level and* others are made at the *district level,* it is important to have parent consultation methods which deal with both levels. It is probably a good idea, therefore, to have an initial meeting for parents at each Chapter 1 school as well as a district-wide meeting, so that methods for ongoing consultation between the school and the Chapter 1 parents can be planned. (A specific method for starting with

### A Note About PACs

If you still have parent advisory councils (PACs) at the school level or district level, you need to think about the relationship of the PACs to the new legal requirements. While PACs are no longer required by federal law, districts are free to establish or maintain them.

First, there is the issue of parent-to-parent communication. Under the law, one purpose of the initial meeting is to allow all parents to establish methods of ongoing communication among themselves to develop parent input; parents are free to organize themselves in a manner of their own choosing, regardless of what it is called. The structure used by the PAC cannot substitute for this parent choice, but it could be what the parents choose, if they feel it has been effective.

Second, there is the issue of parent-school consultation—an issue on which the district must develop policies, with parent input. The PAC structure could be the method that parents negotiate with the school.

school-level meetings and then moving on to a district-wide meeting is set out in the draft school system policy, although it could be done in the reverse order.)

Take an active role with school officials in planning *the meeting's agenda.* The agenda should cover at least the following: (1) the nature of the Chapter 1 program; (2) the rights of parents concerning parent involvement and consultation; (3) initial discussion of what methods for ongoing parent consultation on Chapter 1 decisions would make most sense; (4) opportunity for parents to discuss and decide for themselves how to communicate among themselves for purposes of developing parent input; (5) how parents can obtain program plans, evaluations, and other information; (6) what kinds of support parents need from the district in order to be effective in their consultation role; (7) opportunity for questions and discussion. (See also the list of policy issues to be decided, in part D, below.) Make sure that you and the school officials are clear about who will lead each part of the meeting. Also, make sure that you and they are clear about what aspects of the district's parent involvement policies (including policies for distributing information) will be decided at the meeting and what aspects of those policies will be developed either before or after the meeting.

## B. Go To The Meeting Prepared

Before the meeting, make sure you have *discussed with other parents* your own ideas about *each of the issues which will be discussed at the meeting*—for example, how parents should organize themselves and how they should continue to communicate with each other throughout the year, what the methods of ongoing consultation between school officials and parents should be, how information about the Chapter 1 program should be distributed to parents, what kinds of support parents will need from the school, etc. (See list of policy issues to be decided, in part D, below.) Also, talk through any problems parents may anticipate—for example, talk about any difficulties some parents may have in speaking up at such a meeting and what to do about it. Make sure that at least one person is prepared to speak up on each key point you want to make.

## C. At The Meeting

Make sure that the discussion is adequate for you and other parents to understand the nature of the Chapter 1 program, your rights concerning consultation and involvement, and sources of additional information about the program. (See that a translator is there if needed for non-English-speaking parents.)

Make at least initial decisions about how parents will organize themselves, communicate with each other (including with parents who did not attend), and develop parent positions on Chapter 1 issues throughout the course of the year.

Develop, or get clear on the process for later developing, with parents and school officials, the school district's policies on parent involvement (see below).

Make sure you know what happens next, and who will do what.

## D. Helping Develop the District's Parent Consultation Policies

(See also the "Draft School District Policy on Parent Consultation.")

Under the law, the school district must have policies designed to ensure effective parent consultation, and parents must have an opportunity to comment on these parent consultation policies before they become final. There are no legal requirements as to whether these policies should be developed before, at, or after the initial parent meeting(s), so you should get a clear agreement with school officials about when this will happen.

Whenever these policies are developed, you should play an active role in their development to ensure that they are adequate. Possible issues to be addressed in these policies include:

1. Procedures for conducting the initial yearly meeting, including procedures for giving all eligible parents adequate notice of the meeting;
2. Rights of parents concerning communication among themselves, ability to organize themselves in a manner of their own choosing, etc.;
3. Specific methods for consulting with parents in designing and implementing each aspect of the Chapter 1 program (including all phases of the needs assessment, the selection of attendance zones, determination of goals and objectives, determination of educational strategies, implementation of projects, and program evaluation)—could include PACs, regular open meetings for Chapter 1 parents, various parent committees, individual student planning, the Head Start model (required sign-off by parent committee on all significant decisions), etc.;
4. Provisions for school officials' timely responses to parent communications;
5. Procedures for adequately providing parents with relevant program documents (for example, applicable laws, regulations, and guidelines; proposed and final project applications, needs assessment documents, project plans, budget information, evaluation data);
6. Provision of resources and support to parents (e.g., meeting space, materials, communication facilities, and staff support; also, transportation and day care for meetings);
7. Provisions for parent training programs needed for effective consultation;
8. Opportunities for parents to view program operations;
9. Opportunities for parent involvement in program operations and support activities (which cannot be a substitute for parent consultation);
10. Provisions for consultation with parents of children who are eligible, but are not selected for Chapter 1 services;
11. Procedures for consulting with Chapter 1 students in secondary schools.

## E. After The Meeting, and Development of Consultation Policies

Once the initial meeting has occurred and the district's parent consultation policies have been developed, the task is obviously then to use your rights under the law and the rights you have managed to establish in the district's policies to help improve the quality of all phases of the Chapter 1 program and to make sure it is responsive to your children's needs. Again, remember that this includes:

- the needs assessment;
- selection of attendance zones;
- determination of program goals and objectives;
- determination of educational strategies and methods;
- implementation of projects;
- program evaluation;
- program redesign, based on the evaluation.

A key part of maintaining effective parent involvement is to make sure that communication among parents does not break down and that "parent input" continues to reflect the real, informed views of a broad base of Chapter 1 parents. Ongoing involvement of the Chapter 1 students themselves helps too.

A good, ongoing training program for parents, developed with parent input, may be central to maintaining effective involvement. Areas to cover include program operation, understanding program documents, Chapter 1's legal requirements, understanding parental rights and roles, how parents can work effectively with each other and with the school, as well as educational issues related to Chapter 1 programs.

## F. Other Rights of Parents

In addition to your specific rights under Chapter 1, there are other legal rights which may help you to take an active role in the Chapter 1 program.

**Constitutional Rights to Communicate.** Under the First Amendment, you have the right to speak out, to distribute literature, to assemble or meet, to petition or complain, and to form organizations in a manner of your own choosing. Further, once the school makes any of its facilities (e.g., regular meeting space, public address systems, copying machines, (internal mail systems) available to any parent groups or outside groups, it must make those facilities available to your group on a non-discriminatory basis. Any school rules on time, place, and manner of expression must be narrowly tailored only to avoid substantial disruption of the educational process. The content of your expression is no basis for restricting it, even when harshly critical of school actions, unless it meets very narrow legal standards for defamation or obscenity or is both intended to and likely to provoke immediate violence or illegal acts. Neither you nor your children may be punished in any way for your exercising these constitutional rights.

**Access to Public Information.** Students and parents have the right to inspect and obtain copies of school documents—including Chapter 1 documents—under individual states' "public records" or "freedom of information" laws. These laws vary from state to state in terms of timelines, procedures, and definitions of public records, but they generally cover most documents that are not personal information about particular students or other individuals—such as statistics, budgets, program applications, evaluations, etc.

**Access to Student Records.** The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act gives parents (and students if over 18 or with the consent of parents) the right to inspect all recorded information about the student maintained anywhere and in any form by the school system (except personal notes maintained by a teacher or other official which s/he does not disclose to anyone else), and to obtain at reasonable cost copies when information is released to a third party or when denial of copies would effectively deny the right of inspection. The law also prohibits disclosure to third parties outside the school system without written, informed parental consent (with certain exceptions, such as for court orders) and allows parents to challenge information in the records, by requesting amendment or deletion, obtaining a hearing, and/or adding a statement to the file. Some states may provide additional rights.

## G. Outside Help

If you feel that you need outside help in obtaining or enforcing your rights concerning Chapter 1, there are a variety of sources:

- Your local legal services program (if low-income);
- Other local advocacy organizations;
- State department of education (responsible for local compliance);
- United States Department of Education (do not rely *solely* on this);
- National Coalition of Title I Chapter 1 Parents, 1314 14th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005, (202) 483-8822;
- Center for Law and Education, 14 Appian Way, Cambridge, MA 02138, (617) 495-4666;
- Children's Defense Fund, 122 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001, (202) 628-8787;
- Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, 1400 Eye Street, NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC, 20005, (202) 371-1212;
- National Committee for Citizens in Education, 10840 Little Patuxent Parkway, Suite 301, Columbia, MD 21044 (301) 997-9300.

# Draft School District Policy on Parent Involvement in Chapter 1 Programs

The draft school district policy on Chapter 1 parent involvement, which begins on the next page, is designed to be consistent with the additional requirements for Chapter 1 which Congress passed in 1983—in particular, the requirements that the district adopt effective parent consultation policies and that an initial meeting be held each year for all Chapter 1 parents to begin to set up methods for ongoing parent consultation. Under the law, parents must have an opportunity to express their views concerning the parent consultation policies.

This is a ***draft.*** You may find that certain parts of it are inadequate or not best suited to your local needs. We would like to get your ***comments*** on it. We would also appreciate a ***copy of the parent involvement policy adopted by your district.***
Send it to:

Center for Law and Education
Larsen Hall - 14 Appian Way
Cambridge, MA 02138.

# Draft School District Policy
# On
# Parent Involvement in Chapter 1 Programs

1. Each school receiving Chapter 1 funds shall, by _____ of each school year, send by mail a notice to the parents of each eligible child, in clear language, informing the parents:

(a) about the nature of the Chapter 1 program(s);
(b) that parents have the right to be involved in, and consulted concerning, the planning, development, and operation of such program(s);
(c) that an initial meeting will be held for all such parents in order to discuss the possible form of parent consultation and involvement;
(d) of the time and place of such meeting, which shall be selected in a manner designed to encourage maximum attendance.

This initial notice shall be developed in consultation with parents.

2. At such meeting, school official(s) shall:

(a) explain the nature of the program;
(b) describe the rights of parents and the obligations of school officials set forth in Chapter 1 and this policy concerning parent involvement;
(c) explain that the purpose of the meeting is for parents to decide preliminarily what mechanisms they wish to propose for implementing parent involvement;
(d) state that written copies of information about the program, including the federal statute and regulations, any applicable state or local laws or regulations, and current and prior program applications and evaluations are available;
(e) state that a parent, selected by other parents before or at the meeting, will chair the remainder of the meeting (the current/former PAC chair, if any?);
(f) state that s/he will remain available to answer questions throughout the meeting, but that the meeting is to be run by and for parents.

3. At such meeting, there shall also be announced the time and place of a public district-wide meeting, to be organized in a similar fashion, to discuss the form of parent consultation concerning district-wide issues.

4. Parents shall be free to organize themselves in a manner of their own choosing for purposes of providing school officials with their consultation, consistent with their constitutional rights of free speech, press, assembly, association, and petition, and provided that their activities do not substantially and materially disrupt the educational processes of the school.

5. Whatever form of internal organization parents choose shall assure that all parents of such children are provided regular opportunity for consultation, either directly with school officials and/or through regular communication with those parents who are selected by the parents to consult directly with school officials. The primary responsibility for meeting this requirement is on the parents, but school officials shall offer any reasonable assistance to help parents communicate with each other.

6. Parents (as constituted under paragraph 4) and school officials will jointly agree on methods for school officials to consult with parents on all aspects of Chapter 1 planning, design, and implementation—including all phases of (a) the needs assessment, (b) selection of attendance zones, (c) determination of program goals and objectives, (d) determination of educational strategies, (e) implementation of projects, (f) development of program applications, and (g) program evaluations. These methods of consultation shall then be reduced to writing and distributed in an effective manner to all eligible parents.

7. School officials shall provide a full and timely response to any parent recommendations concerning the program(s) and, to the extent that such recommendations are rejected, shall explain the basis for their decision. If the recommendation was made in writing, the response shall be in writing.

8. School officials shall be prepared to offer, upon request, such support and resources as are needed for effective and full parent consultation and involvement, including, but not limited to:

(a) reasonable access to meeting space, necessary materials, available communications facilities, and clerical and other support staff;
(b) an ongoing and effective program of training for parents, to be developed in consultation with parents, incuding training concerning federal, state, and local legal requirements for the program, how the program actually operates, the rights and responsibilities of parents, and how parents can work effectively with each other and with the school in developing and providing parent consultation and involvement;

*(continued)*

(c) provision to parents, in a timely manner, of proposed and final project applications, needs assessment documents, project plans, budgetary information, evaluation data, state, federal, and local statutes, regulations, and guidelines, and any other information needed for full, effective, and informed parent involvement;

(d) opportunities to view the operation of programs, including classroom visits, in order to acquire the information and experience needed for meaningful consultation;

(e) opportunities for parents to be involved in operation of programs, home learning activities with their children, and other support activities, but such activities shall not be used as a substitute for parent consultation;

(f) a budget sufficient to fully fund the parent activities called for by this policy, a portion of which (to be determined through the consultation required by this policy) shall be provided directly to the parents and administered through the parent mechanisms established under this policy for parent-initiated activities.

9. In developing methods and policy guidelines for parent consultation, parents and school officials shall annually, through the mechanisms established by this policy, conduct a thorough review of parent consultation to determine the causes of any barriers to full and effective parent involvement. This information shall then be used to review and revise the methods and policies for consultation in order to increase the effectiveness of parent consultation.

More specific policy guidelines shall be developed in each of the above five areas, through consultation with parents consistent with this parent consultation policy.

10. After the first year of this parent consultation process, the meetings described in paragraphs 1-3 shall be held each year but shall be organized, with the assistance of school officials, by parents through the parent involvement mechanism established the previous year. If for any reason parents are not available through this mechanism to organize the meetings, school officials shall do so in the manner described in paragraphs 1-3.

*NOTE TO PARENTS*—The above suggested model policy does not deal with certain issues which you might want to have addressed in your school system's policy.

*Other possible issues include:*

1. Policies on consultation with secondary school *students*.
2. Policies for parental (and student) involvement in developing *individual education plans* for Chapter 1 students. (See Public Law 94-142, concerning development of plans for handicapped students. The Title I law and regulations formerly encouraged the development of such individual plans, with consent of the parent and, where appropriate, the student.)
3. Consideration of the parent involvement approach of *Head Start programs as a model* for Chapter 1 programs. Head Start requires, for example, that all key program decisions must be made with the approval of a parent committee.
4. Role of *parent advisory councils*. The draft policy here is compatible with keeping existing PACs (as constituted under paragraph 4), if that is the choice of the parents and the district—once the parents come together they are free to organize themselves in a manner of their own choosing, whether or not it is called a PAC.

# Survey Questions on Parent Involvement in Chapter 1 Programs

The questions in this survey may help you examine how well parent involvement is working in your school and school district.

Parents may want to discuss the answers with each other and with school officials as a basis for making changes. In addition, we request that you ***send us a copy of the answers, identifying your school/school district and indicating briefly how the information was collected.*** This will help us in recognizing major problems and in providing better assistance to low-income parents and their representatives.

## Organization of the Survey

These questions cover each major aspect of parent involvement in three ways: First (Part A), what does the written policy say about it? Second (Part B), how was it discussed at the initial parent meeting? Third (Parts C-K), how does it work in actual practice? Notice that this is similar to how we have analyzed the legal requirements for parent involvement, in an earlier section of this booklet, entitled "Your Rights As A Parent To Be Involved in Chapter 1."

There are different ways to use these questions, and it may not be necessary to try to answer all of them. You might want to focus on one area at a time, moving on to other areas when they become more relevant later. You might want to go through and first answer only those questions about which you already have the information. This may tell you and others whether there is enough of a problem to then try to get resources to do a more extensive review.

## Collecting and Using The Survey Information

Parents may want to develop a plan for collecting and using the information. The more parents who are involved in the process, the more meaningful the product will be. A group could:

1. define the purposes of the project,
2. develop more specific measures and methods for accurately answering the questions,
3. develop a collection plan, including tasks, assignments, and time-lines,
4. collect the data,
5. analyze the data, including sharing the preliminary results with others (including other parents) to help make sure that the analysis is on target,
6. write and distribute a report, and
7. use the results to develop an action plan to remedy any problems.

As part of this action plan, parents can:

1. define the problems,
2. establish goals for change,
3. look at factors which could help or could hurt achievement of the goals,
4. choose overall strategies and specific tactics for achieving the goals,
5. develop a specific work plan, with responsibilities and time-lines, and
6. choose measures for later evaluating whether you have achieved your goals

In order to save space, we have not allowed room to write in the answers to the questions. However, the Center for Law and Education does have another version of the same questions, with spaces to write in your answers. Ask our Cambridge office for a copy of the "long version" of the survey questions on parent involvement in Chapter 1 programs.

# Survey Questions on Parent Involvement in Chapter 1 Programs

## A. Parent Involvement Policies

1. Is there a written policy on parent consultation? (If so, attach it to the answers to this survey.)
2. How were parents involved in developing this policy?
3. Does it cover:
   a. Parent consultation on all program aspects, including:
      i. selection of attendance zones?
      ii. targeting of particular students/grades/subject areas/skills?
      iii. assessment of student needs?
      iv. determination of program goals and objectives?
      v. choice of educational strategies and methods?
      vi. the funding application?
      vii. implementation of projects?
      viii. program evaluation?
   b. All significant areas of program decisionmaking, whether the decisions are made:
      i. school district level?
      ii. individual school or project level?
      iii. for the individual child?
   c. Procedures for the annual parent meeting?
   d. Timely response to parent input?
   e. Parent access to information?
   f. Parent training?
   g. Other support and resources for parent involvement?
   h. Parent rights concerning ongoing parent meetings and parent communication?
   i. Procedures for involvement of secondary school students?
4. Is the policy distributed to all eligible parents on a regular basis, in an effective form and manner?
   a. In a form in which the parents can understand?
   b. With translations or other effective assistance for parents with limited English proficiency?

## B. Annual Meeting

1. Were parents invited to a meeting to explain the Chapter 1 program and to plan for ongoing parent consultation? If yes, answer the rest of Part B; if no, skip to Part C.
2. When did this meeting occur?
3. Invitation
   a. Were all parents sent an invitation to the initial open parent meeting on Chapter 1? How was it sent?
   b. Was the notice adequate?
      i. Did it give parents enough lead time?
      ii. Did it explain that the meeting was to inform parents about the nature of the Chapter 1 program and to begin to set up a system for ongoing parent consultation?
      iii. Was it written in clear, easily understandable language?
      iv. Was it translated for parents who do not read English?
4. What role, if any, did parents have in planning the initial parent meeting? In developing the invitation?
5. At the meeting:
   a. How many parents attended?
   b. Was the time and place convenient for most parents?
   c. How long did the meeting last?
   d. Who ran the meeting?
   e. Did school officials explain the nature of the Chapter 1 program, including a discussion of the Chapter 1 law, in terms that parents understood?
   f. Were parents given an adequate opportunity to have their questions about the program answered?
   g. Did school officials or parent leaders adequately explain the rights of parents to be consulted in all aspects of the Chapter 1 program and the obligation of the school system to involve parents—and the existing consultation policies and/or the steps which will be taken to develop those policies? (See Part C below.)
   h. Were parents' rights to receive information, program plans, evaluations, etc., clearly explained at the meeting? (See Part F below.)
   i. Were other aspects of parent consultation—such as parent training, access to support and other resources, and parent opportunities to work with Chapter 1 children—adequately discussed? (See Parts G-J below.)
   j. Were the parents given an opportunity to organize themselves in a manner of their own choosing for purposes of ongoing communication among parents? (See Part E below.)
6. Were there separate meetings to discuss parent consultation at the school level and at the school-district level?
   a. If so, answer questions 1-5 separately for both the school and the district-wide meetings?
   b. If not, how were parents involved in discussion and developing parent consultation methods for both the school level and the district-wide level?

*(continued)*

## Parent Involvement Survey — Page 2

### C. Ongoing Consultation with School Officials

1. Did parents participate in deciding on the methods for ongoing consultation between parents and school officials? How?
2. What methods of ongoing consultation between school officials and parents have been established?
3. Does the system for parent consultation effectively involve parents in Chapter 1 decisions at all decision-making levels, including decisions made at:
   a. the district-wide level?
   b. the individual school level?
   c. the individual child level?
4. Does the system for parent consultation effectively involve parents in decisions in all phases of the Chapter 1 program? Specifically, *how* are parents involved in:
   a. Selection of attendance zones?
   b. Assessment of student needs?
   c. Methods for selection of particular students?
   d. Selection of particular grades, subject areas, and skills?
   e. Selection of program goals and objectives?
   f. Choice of educational strategies and methods?
   g. The funding application?
   h. Implementing of projects?
   i. Evaluation of programs?
5. Do these methods give *all* parents an opportunity for regular consultation? How?
6. If ongoing consultation takes place mainly through a particular set of parents, how were these parents selected?
7. Is there an effective program for recruiting parents for purposes of parent consultation? Explain.
8. If ongoing consultation takes place mainly through a particular set of parents, do those parents regularly communicate with all Chapter 1 parents? How?
9. Are there methods for consulting with parents whose children are eligible but not selected?
10. Head Start methods
    a. Are Chapter 1 parents familiar with the methods of parent involvement used in "Head Start" programs?
    b. Has there been any discussion among parents, or between parents and school officials, about whether the parent involvement methods used in Head Start would make any sense for the Chapter 1 program?
11. Individual student planning
    a. Is there a method for involving parents in developing and approving plans for the Chapter 1 program for their child (similar to the individual education plan for handicapped students under Public Law 94-142)? Explain.
    b. If so, how effective is the individual plan process?
12. Is there regular reevaluation of the parent consultation methods to see how well they are working?
    a. How are parents involved in this reevaluation?
    b. Are the results used effectively to improve parent consultation?

### D. School Response to Parent Input

1. Do school officials provide a full and prompt response to parent recommendations about the Chapter 1 program, including the reasons for rejecting recommendations?
2. Over the past year, how many parent recommendations have been accepted? How many have been rejected or ignored? Give examples of some of the most important recommendations which have been accepted, rejected, or ignored.

### E. Ongoing Communication Among Parents

1. Did the Chapter 1 parents choose their own methods for communicating and working with each other? Explain.
2. How often do Chapter 1 parents meet with each other to discuss the program and their involvement?
   a. Who runs these meetings?
   b. Who attends?
   c. Are they effective? Explain why or why not.
3. Do the parents use any other methods for communicating with each other? How effective are they?
4. Are there any barriers to parents effectively communicating with each other and developing parent recommendations for the program?

### F. Access to Information and to Programs

1. What is the system, if any, for regularly providing parents with the following information:
   a. Proposed and final program applications?
   b. Documents concerning the needs assessment?
   c. Project plans?
   d. Budget information?
   e. Program evaluations?
   f. Federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines?
   g. Other needed information?
2. Is the information provided in a form which is useful and understandable by parents, including parents with limited English proficiency?
3. Is the information provided in a timely way? In other words, do parents get enough time to review the information before decisions are made and before parent input is sought?
4. Are Chapter 1 parents free to visit and observe the program? Are there any barriers to this?

*(continued)*

## G. Training

1. Is there a program for training parents? If yes, answer the rest of this section; if no, skip to the next section.
2. Describe the training program.
3. Were parents involved in developing the training program?
4. Does it include training on:
   a. Federal, state, and local legal requirements for Chapter 1?
   b. How the Chapter 1 program actually operates?
   c. The rights and responsibilities of parents under Chapter 1?
   d. The rights of parents under the First Amendment (freedom of speech, right to distribute literature, to meet, etc.)?
   e. How parents can work effectively with each other and the school in developing and providing parent consultation and involvement?
5. How many of the Chapter 1 parents receive the training?
6. Is this training effective? Why or why not?
7. How well do parents understand their rights under Chapter 1 and under the First Amendment?

## H. Access to Other Support and Resources

1. Do parents have adequate access to:
   a. School meeting space?
   b. Necessary materials and supplies?
   c. Available communications facilities (xerox, use of the school's system for distributing notices, etc.)?
   d. Clerical help (typing, etc.)?
   e. Other support from school staff?
   f. Child care during parent meetings?
   g. Transportation to meetings?
   h. A budget for other parent expenses and activities?

## I. Complaints

1. Is there a system for hearing and resolving parents' complaints about the Chapter 1 program?
2. How were parents involved in designing the complaint system?
3. How well does it work? Why?

## J. Related Parent Activities

1. Is there a program for:
   a. Helping Chapter 1 parents to work with their children at home?
   b. Chapter 1 parents concerning their own educational needs?
   c. Chapter 1 parents to work with children in the school?
2. How were parents involved in designing these programs?
3. How effective is each of these programs? Why?

## K. Student Involvement

1. Does the school system have a Chapter 1 program for junior or senior high school students?
2. If yes, are Chapter 1 students involved in the planning or implementing of the Chapter 1 program?
   a. How?
   b. Is the student involvement effective? Explain.